

Night – Writing Project

Choose 8 of the topics below to complete for a collective work that will be due at the end of the Night Unit.

1. Eliezer explains that the underprivileged people in his hometown are assisted, but ostracized by the townspeople. Eliezer lives in a small town in Transylvania, but his observation may be applicable to other parts of the world. In your opinion, is this statement a fair depiction of how the poor and homeless are treated in American society? Does social class discrimination exist today? Describe the situation in the form of a one-page journal entry.
2. Eliezer's father is a highly respected member of the community whose advice is often sought. Think of a person you admire for his or her intelligence or skill at Purnell Swett High School. Pretend that you are entering this person in a contest titled, "Teacher of the Year." Write a letter to this teacher describing the traits that you admire in this person and how he or she has influenced you. You will give this letter to the person that has influenced you the most.
3. Eliezer wishes to study Kabbalah, and he asks his father to find an instructor. His father, however, refuses because of Eliezer's young age. Do you agree or disagree with Eliezer's father? Do you believe that Eliezer is old enough to make his own decisions, or should he heed his father's spiritual guidance? Have you or someone you know ever been denied something because of age? What did you want, who prevented you, and how did you feel? Describe the situation in the form of a one-page journal entry.
4. Moishe returns to Sighet with horrific tales of his experiences in the Galician forest. He desperately tries to warn the townspeople about the Gestapo, but his words go unheeded. Why do you suppose that no one will listen to Moishe? Why is Moishe not only ignored, but considered insane? What does this tell about the people of Sighet? Does this relate in any way in which people often try to preach an upcoming event of catastrophe or apocalyptic biblical message and others deny the speaker? Have you ever tried to warn someone about a relationship or situation, when you could see the warning signs but your advice or voice was not heeded? Describe the situation in the form of a one-page journal entry.
5. The Germans arrive in Sighet and lodge in the townspeople's homes. Despite their grim uniforms, the soldiers appear to be polite and nonthreatening. Another example of where this occurred in history is before the Revolutionary War in America, British "red coat" soldiers were residing in homes of the Boston people. This same type of tactic was used for what purpose? How would you react if an army of an enemy nation suddenly arrived in your town, and some began living in your home? Discuss in detail how this is a direct, yet unassuming attack against personal freedom. Describe the situation in the form of a one-page journal entry.
6. News arrives that the ghettos are being liquidated and that all residents are being transported. People have less than twenty-four hours to prepare to leave their homes and travel to an unknown location for an indeterminate amount of time. Reflect on how you would feel in this predicament. Imagine that you are a resident of the ghetto, and compose a poem about what is occurring. For instance, the poem may express feelings or depict events that are taking place. You may choose any format for the poem; the final work should contain at least six lines.
7. Eliezer's family has a chance to escape to a safe house with Maria, their former maid, but the father refuses. The children, afraid to part from their parents, also decide to stay in the ghetto. Do you believe that they made a wise decision? Remember that the family does not know the horrors they are yet to encounter; the future is uncertain. As a friend, write an imaginary letter to Eliezer and his sisters offering guidance on a course of action based on what they know up to this point. Give at least two reasons to support your advice.
8. Eliezer poses a profound question: "How was it possible that men, women, and children were being burned and that the world kept silent?" Write a response to this thought provoking question. Do you believe the world should have intervened sooner to stop the atrocities that were taking place? Do you think the US should have intervened? Describe your thoughts in the form of a one-page journal entry.

9. Stein has hope for his wife and children; he claims that this hope is the only thing sustaining him. Eliezer knows that they are likely dead, but he lies by giving Stein false hope that his family is alive. In your opinion, is Eliezer justified to lie, or should he be completely honest? When Stein finds out the truth what can you infer happens? Have you ever been in a situation where you were forced to tell a lie or you decided it was in the best interest of everyone to lie? Describe your thoughts in the form of a one-page journal entry.
10. When the sirens sound, the guards take cover, leaving the fences and food unwatched. A crowd hungrily stares at an unguarded cauldron of soup, but no one dares to take any soup because, as Eliezer explains, "Fear was greater than hunger." Finally, one man does attempt to get some food, but he is shot in the process. Answer the following questions using complete sentences. How far do you believe the prisoners can be pushed before they rebel, if at all? For instance, would the prisoners be more likely to revolt or die of hunger, and why? Eliezer calls the man who is shot a hero. Do you agree? Explain your answer. If you were in this situation, do you think that you would try to get some soup or just watch, and why? Discuss your thoughts in the form of a one-page journal entry.
11. A public execution takes place as the SS hang a man for stealing during the air raid. Eliezer writes, "The thousands of people who died daily in Auschwitz and Birkenau, in the crematoria, no longer troubled me. But this boy, leaning against his gallows, upset me deeply." Explain this statement in depth. Wasn't Elie a boy, as well? During the execution, Julieck whispers to Eliezer, "This ceremony, will it be over soon? I'm hungry..." What does this statement suggest about the prisoners' outlook on life and death? What's most important to the prisoners? Address this subject in a paragraph. At the execution, both prisoners and guards are clearly troubled by the victim's young age. After the hanging, as the crowd is leaving, a man asks, "For God's sake, where is God?" Eliezer responds, "Where He is? This is where—hanging here from this gallows...." What do you believe has shifted at this point for Eliezer and his relationship with God?
12. A few prisoners are instructed to mop the floor of the block before the camp is evacuated. When asked why, the Blockälteste replies, "Let them know that here lived men and not pigs." Answer the following questions in complete sentences: In your opinion, how is this statement ironic? What do you think the prisoners think when they hear the Blockälteste's comment? As they clean the area, what do you think goes through everyone's minds? From this statement, what can be inferred about the Germans way of thinking?
13. During a short rest, Eliezer and his father fight to stay awake because they know that sleep could lead to their deaths. At one point, Eliezer has to wake his dozing father, who is startled and then smiles. Eliezer writes, "I shall always remember that smile. What world did it come from?" Why do you suppose his father smiled? Write a poem about the characteristics of someone that you remember fondly. This must be someone that has been very dear to you, either in your present or past.
14. During selection, Eliezer's father is chosen for execution. Eliezer causes a disturbance in order to sneak his father to the other side, but several prisoners are shot during the ruckus. Imagine that the war is now over, and Eliezer must answer for the deaths that he caused. Answer one of the following questions to answer with a short essay. Your essay should be at least one page in length. Do you feel that Eliezer is innocent and should not face punishment? If so, write his defense. Provide justifiable reasons for his actions, and describe the emotional effects that Eliezer retained. Explain how the extreme circumstances apply, and clarify the motives for Eliezer's behavior. **OR** Do you believe that Eliezer should be held at least partially accountable for the deaths? If so, explain why he is responsible despite the circumstances. In your opinion, what type of punishment is acceptable?
15. Eliezer's father is taken to the crematorium during the night; he will have no funeral service or tombstone. Imagine that Eliezer, who was unable to say goodbye, takes the time to write a eulogy for his father. What do you suppose he will say? Compose the eulogy from Eliezer's point of view.
16. What do you suppose Eliezer did after leaving Buchenwald? What would you do? Research what happens next to Eliezer. What are your thoughts about his next phase of his life? Provide a continued biography and cite references.

